The Lillingstone Family

Families grow like branches on a tree - each taking its own direction yet held together by the same strong roots

Suffolk Roots
Queensland Branches

The Lillingstone Family
Suffolk Roots, Queensland Branches

Welcome

W. H. Lillingstone

Every family has stories: some celebrated, some whispered, and some waiting to be rediscovered. This narrative is dedicated to uncovering and preserving the rich heritage of William Hammond Lillingstone (1859–1941), whose life began in the quiet fields of rural Suffolk, where generations of his family had toiled the land with hands weathered by soil and seasons.

Yet William's story didn't end where it began. It continued through the smoky streets of London, crossed oceans to Queensland's sunburnt paddocks, and braved the icy breath of Canadian winters. Eventually, it circled back to Queensland—his long life etched in the faded ink and brittle paper of English, Australian, and Canadian records. We begin now with William's surname—one with many spellings, including:

Leliston	Lellaston	Lileston	Liliston	Lilleston	Lilleyston	Lilleystone
Lillingston	Lillingstone	Lilliston	Lillistone	Lillyston	Lillystone	Lilyston
Luliston	Lyliston	Lylleston	Lylliston	Lyllistone		

His uncommon surname reaches back to Old English, where it derives from *Lytel's boundary stone,* a reference to the current Buckinghamshire villages of Lillingstone Lovell and Lillingstone Dayrell, nestled close to the Northamptonshire border. Its ancient origin reflects a time when surnames were shaped by landmarks, geography, and occupations.

As noted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (2016), William's name is directly linked to the above-mentioned villages. In the medieval period, it appeared as *Lillingestan* and *Litlingestan*, and during the Norman Conquest, as *Lelinchestane*. Through the ages, it has gradually spread, predominantly across southern England.

Manors of Lillingstone Lovell and Lillingstone Dayrell

While some believe that carrying the Lillingstone name is proof of ancestral ownership of the manors of Lillingstone Lovell or Lillingstone Dayrell, such claims are not based on historical fact. The lines of succession to these estates can be traced with certainty far beyond the time when William's forebears had established themselves in Suffolk, on England's eastern coast.

Lillingstone Lovell: Tucked away in the Buckinghamshire countryside, this manor held centuries of layered history until 1546, when King Henry VIII gave it to Sir Nicholas Wentworth (born circa 1482 in Lillingstone Lovell), whose maternal lineage—the FitzSimons—owned it during the 1400s. Later, in 1784, William Wentworth Cresswell died, leaving the manor to his brother-in-law, Major Drake, for his lifetime, with the remainder to his cousin, the Honourable Edward Onslow.

Under Onslow's stewardship, it fell into disrepair. The once-stately manor house, built during Henry VIII's reign, was pulled down. By 1821, the estate, encompassing nearly the entire parish, had a new owner—James Boyle Delap, Esq. of Stoke Park in Surrey. On his death in 1850, it passed to his widow and, after her, to his nephew, the Reverend Robert Delap of County Donegal, Ireland.

Lillingstone Dayrell: A short walk from Lillingstone Lovell lies the manor of Lillingstone Dayrell. It belonged to the Earls of Buckingham in Saxon times. William the Conqueror granted it to a Norman knight named William D'airel, founder of the English Dayrell family, who held the manor for about 800 years. Their castellated mansion was demolished in 1767, before a new, more modest home was built in 1792 by Richard Dayrell, Esq. Its last lord of the manor was Captain Edmund Marmaduke Dayrell, who sold the estate in the 1880s to banker Abraham John Robarts—thus closing an extraordinary chapter in Dayrell family history.

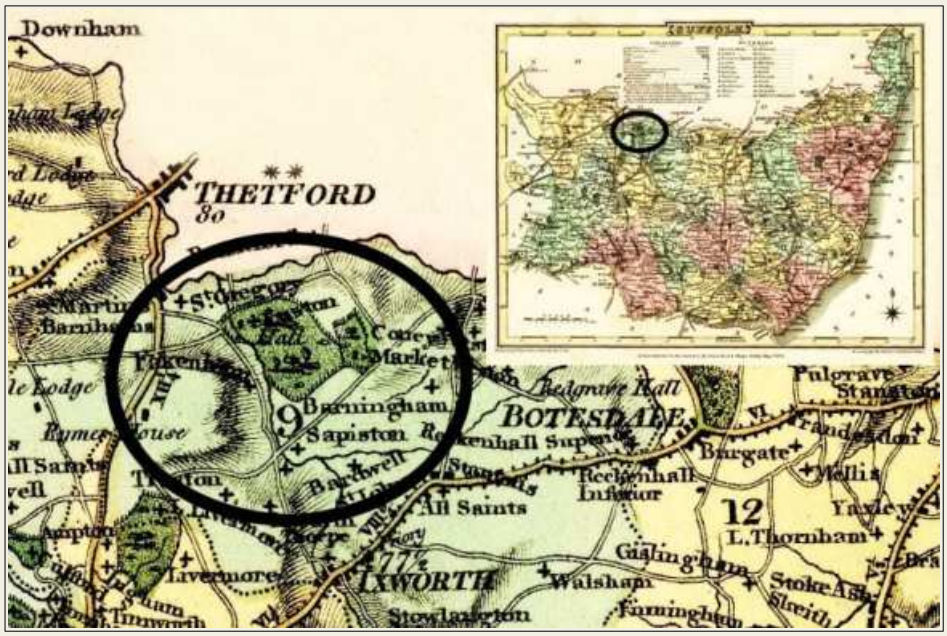
Gray's New Book of Roads (1824). Buckinghamshire coloured green, and Suffolk brown. The distance from Lillingstone Lovell and Lillingstone Dayrell in Buckinghamshire to the Lillingstone family in Suffolk is about 150 kilometres.

The Suffolk Lillingstones

William Hammond Lillingstone was born in the English county of Suffolk. His Suffolk ancestors used surname variants such as Lillinstone, Lillyston, Lilliston, Lillystons, Lylleston, and Lyllistone. In 1836, William's father, Thomas, was baptised in Suffolk. His surname appeared in church records under two spellings: Lilystone and Lillystone. Some of Thomas' siblings were baptised as Lillestone, Lillingston, Lillingstone and Lilystone. Often, their baptism and birth certificates reflected different spellings, indicating a family with limited literacy.

When William's father married in 1858, he signed the church register as Lillingston, but soon after adopted the "Lillingstone" spelling. Ancestry.com records thirteen Lillingstone families in Suffolk in the 1891 British Census—about 81% of all Lillingstones in the United Kingdom.

The parish registers of Suffolk are being digitised. Once available, we will learn more about the family, or see if details need updating. This project will also answer a key question about their literacy: could any of William's ancestors sign their name in the parish register, or only make a mark? Until the digitisation is complete, we rely on transcriptions kindly provided by the Suffolk Family History Society.



Suffolk by Cole & Roper (1808). Euston Hall in dark green, Fakenham Magna to the left and Sapiston below.

Suffolk holds centuries of Lillingstone baptisms, marriages, and burials. When we narrow our focus to the villages of Euston, Fakenham Magna (or Great Fakenham), and Sapiston in northern Suffolk, we uncover generations of Lillingstones living, working, and laying down roots as far back as the sixteenth century—all within the same small corner of rural Suffolk where William was born in 1859.

Euston Hall, 1821.

The Temple in Euston Park, built by the 2nd Duke of Grafton as a banqueting hall.

William's birth took place in Euston, where his father worked as a gamekeeper for the 5th Duke of Grafton. Euston Hall is the ducal seat and current home to the 12th Duke of Grafton. Nineteenth-century estate descriptions noted its circumference of between 50 and 65 kilometres. The Euston Estate also included a number of small villages. Three of these were Euston, Fakenham Magna, and Sapiston. In this part of northern Suffolk, William's earliest known ancestors are Thomas Lyllistone and Mary Harwell. They lived in Sapiston in 1760, but its parish register shows variations of their surname even earlier. This suggests the family was present in the area prior to 1760. The following list traces William's ancestry back four generations:

1. **William Hammond Lillingstone**, born 1859 in Euston
2. **Parents:** Thomas Lilystone and Ellen Archer married 1858, Euston
3. **Grandparents:** John Lillyston and Elizabeth Stebbings married 1825, Fakenham Magna
4. **Great grandparents:** Thomas Lillistone and Mary Symonds married 1795, Fakenham Magna
5. **Great, great grandparents:** Thomas Lyllistone and Mary Harwell married 1760, Sapiston

The Village of Sapiston, Suffolk

St Andrew, Sapiston Church from *Views in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire* by James Sargant Storer (1818).

Sapiston is roughly 130 kilometres north-east of London. In the early nineteenth century, Benjamin Pitts Capper, writing in his *Topographical Dictionary of the United Kingdom* (1808), described the village as a modest settlement with 29 houses and 207 residents. By 1847, historian Augustine Page noted that nearly all the land belonged to the Duke of Grafton, underscoring its strong ties to landed aristocracy.

Two decades later, *The National Gazetteer* (1868) painted a peaceful picture of Sapiston as an entirely agricultural village along the Thet, an offshoot of the Brandon River. The Duke of Grafton had established a parochial school, and St. Andrew's Church—an ancient stone building with a thatched roof—stood as a timeless landmark. We even have a tale from the early 1800s, telling how jackdaws regularly pilfered thatch from the church roof, leaving it nearly unroofed at times.

Thomas Lyllistone and Mary Harwell
[William's Great, Great Grandparents]

Thomas and Mary married on June 10, 1760, in Sapiston. The parish register has three baptisms for their children:

1. **Elizabeth**, August 15, 1762
2. **Sarah**, June 8, 1766
3. **Thomas, April 28, 1772—possibly born circa 1770 but baptised in 1772**

Little is known about the lives of Thomas and Mary, but it's likely they were buried in Sapiston: Mary on January 20, 1799, and Thomas on September 24, 1809. Neither has a headstone in the churchyard, and no marriage licence or probate record has been located in the Suffolk Record Office. An absence of headstones, marriage licences, probate records, land tax, or any mention in gazetteers and directories over decades, usually indicates a family with little or no financial means. We know their son and grandson worked as agricultural labourers for the Duke of Grafton. It's a fair assumption that Thomas Lyllistone did the same.

Child agricultural labourers in the nineteenth century.

Life for English agricultural labourers throughout history was one of hardship and poverty. Survival often depended on poor relief or charity, and the death of a breadwinner could plunge a family into destitution. With families earning meagre wages, every member—no matter how small—was expected to contribute.

Children as young as five were put to work. Their tasks included pulling weeds, scaring birds from crops, clearing stones, and helping with the harvest. For many, regular schooling was minimal or nonexistent. Without education, these children faced the same cycle of poverty as their parents, with little hope for a different future.

It was mid-nineteenth-century reformers who drew attention to the plight of working children, prompting early legislative efforts to curb child labour and improve access to education. Yet progress was painfully slow—especially for the rural poor. This offers a sobering glimpse into the world of the Lillingstone family, where childhood was often sacrificed to a family's survival.

Euston Hall and Fakenham from *Views in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire* by James Storer (1818).

The Village of Fakenham Magna, Suffolk

Drawing from books published between 1818 and 1875, we learn that Fakenham Magna was a small village situated in a pleasant valley about 8 kilometres south-east of the town of Thetford, in neighbouring Norfolk. At its heart stood the brick church of St. Peter, whose parish records stretch back to 1559—a testament to centuries of village life. The Duke of Grafton was its sole landholder. Playing a key role in the community, he even supported its national school, built in 1827.

In 1801, Fakenham Magna was home to just 157 people. It grew to 204 by 1831, with most working the land, a small number in domestic service, and a few employed in local shops. Yet beneath the pastoral calm, tensions simmered. In November 1843, the village experienced an act of incendiarism—arson sparked by agrarian unrest.

During this period, rural England was undergoing a profound social and economic shift. As a result of poor working conditions and the steady erosion of livelihoods by new technologies, some agricultural labourers turned to fire as a desperate means of protest. Suffolk and Norfolk were particularly hard hit. More than 250 fires were reported between 1843 and 1845 alone. Fakenham Magna, though small, was not untouched by the winds of change sweeping through the country-side.

Bardwell Road, Fakenham Magna, Suffolk.

Thomas Lillistone and Mary Symonds
[William's Great Grandparents]

A short distance from Sapiston is Fakenham Magna, where Thomas Lillistone and Mary Symonds married on January 26, 1795. Its parish register has the baptisms of three children, while four younger children were baptised at Sapiston.

1. **Thomas**, July 19, 1795, Fakenham Magna
2. **John**, August 6, 1797, Fakenham Magna—buried November 12, 1797, Fakenham Magna
3. **William**, December 16, 1798, Fakenham Magna
4. **Samuel**, April 18, 1801, Sapiston—buried February 14, 1822, Fakenham Magna
5. **John, June 12, 1803, Sapiston**
6. **James**, August 10, 1806, Sapiston—buried August 17, 1806, Sapiston
7. **Mary**, March 13, 1809, Sapiston

After 18 years of marriage, 44-year-old Mary Lillistone died and was buried on September 8, 1813, at Fakenham Magna. About seven months later, Thomas remarried to Sarah Clark in the same church on April 23, 1814. They had one daughter baptised:

1. **Sarah**, December 3, 1815, Fakenham Magna

Thanks to Thomas' inclusion in the British Censuses of 1841 and 1851, we are fortunate to gain some knowledge of his later years. In 1841, he and Sarah were living in Fakenham Magna. They were elderly Suffolk natives with family close by, and Thomas continued to work the land as an agricultural labourer.

By 1851, at the age of 81, Thomas shared a home in Fakenham Magna with his grandson, William, and William's wife, Ann. William worked as an agricultural labourer. Remarkably—in his ninth decade—so did Thomas. The census that year confirmed his birthplace as Sapiston and quietly revealed a sad truth: Thomas had been widowed. His marriage to Sarah had lasted more than 30 years before her death, aged 70. She was buried in Fakenham Magna on March 16, 1848. Thomas followed her nearly nine years later. Aged 86, he too was buried in the peaceful grounds of the Fakenham Magna village church on January 2, 1857—bringing an end to a long life shaped by toil, family, and enduring ties to the Suffolk soil.

John Lillyston and Elizabeth Stebbings
[William's Grandparents]

John was born and baptised in Sapiston. During his childhood, his family returned to Fakenham Magna, where his parents had spent the first years of their marriage. This time of his life was defined by both loss and change—his mother died when he was young, his father remarried, and a baby sister joined the family.

In his early twenties, John began a new chapter of his own. On October 8, 1825, he married Elizabeth Stebbings in Fakenham Magna. Elizabeth—several years his junior—had been born in the Suffolk village of Stowlangtoft. Over time, her surname appeared as Stevens and Steben, but Stebbings seems to be the most likely spelling.

The parish register of Fakenham Magna records the baptisms of nine children, beginning shortly after their wedding:

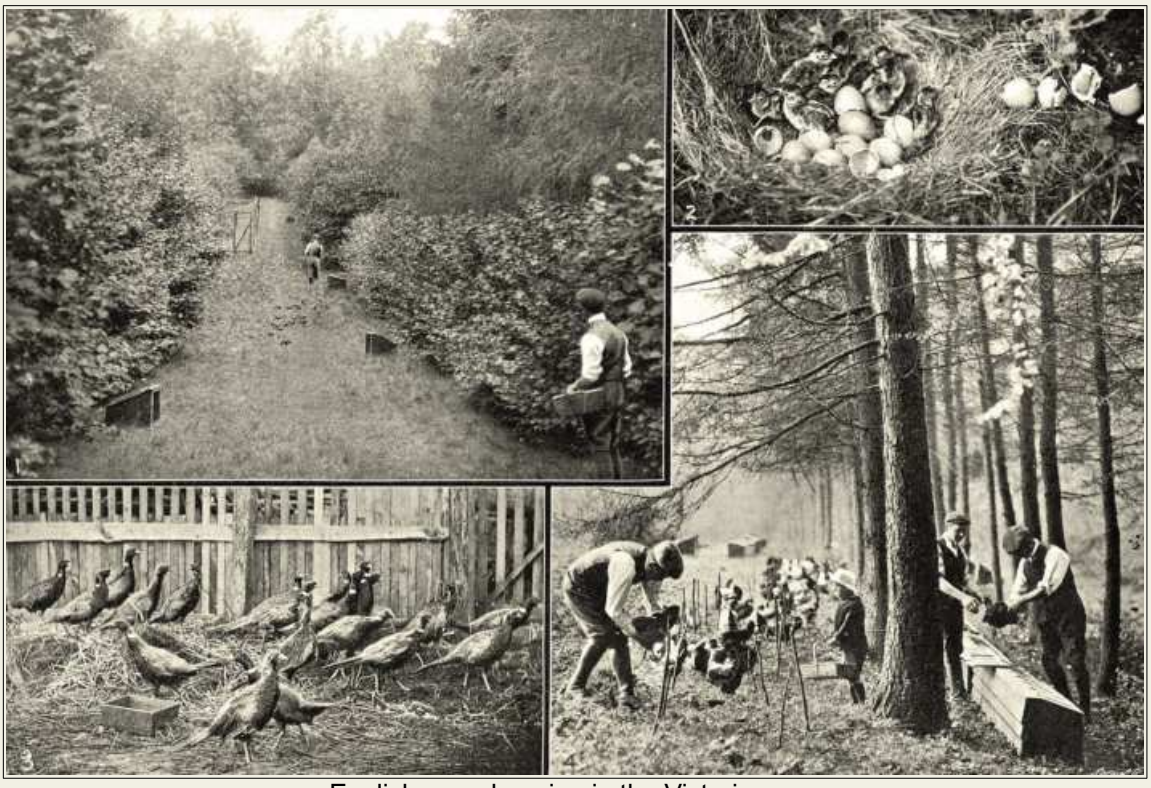
1. **Mary**, January 10, 1826
2. **William**, February 27, 1828
3. **John**, May 1830—prior to the 17th
4. **Sarah**, January 27, 1833
5. **Thomas, May 22, 1836**
6. **Elizabeth**, June 3, 1838
7. **Lucy**, June 20, 1841
8. **Hannah** [called Anna], December 29, 1844
9. **Samuel**, May 28, 1848—buried March 11, 1849, Fakenham

Between 1826 and 1841, we know that John worked the fields of Fakenham Magna as an agricultural labourer employed by the Duke of Grafton. The family lived in the village on the night of the 1841 Census. Unlike later censuses, it offers limited insight into a household—ages were rounded down to the nearest five years for everyone aged over 15, and relationships weren't recorded. This leaves some details open to interpretation.

1841 Census: Fakenham Magna

Name	Age	Occupation	Where Born
John Lilliston	35	Agricultural Labourer	Suffolk
Elizabeth Lilliston	35		Suffolk
William Lilliston	15		Suffolk
John Lilliston	10		Suffolk
Sarah Lilliston	10		Suffolk
Thomas Lilliston	5		Suffolk
Elizabeth Lilliston	4		Suffolk
Fanny Lilliston	2		Suffolk

One small mystery stands out in this census transcription: who was 2-year-old Fanny Lilliston? Her age places her between Elizabeth's birth in 1838 and Lucy's in 1841. This suggests she might be another daughter, but no birth, baptism, or burial has been found for a Fanny Lilliston—or similar surname—born around 1839. She could be a young relative visiting for the night, or it could be a clerical error (or ink blot), and Fanny, aged 2 years, should be Lucy, aged 2 months.



English gamekeeping in the Victorian era.

Between June 1841 and September 1842, a fundamental change occurred for John and his family. The Duke of Grafton appointed him as a gamekeeper for the manors of Fakenham, Honington, Barnham, and Euston. A gamekeeper's main role was to ensure a steady supply of game animals for shooting parties and fish for fishing. Gamekeepers also managed the forests, moorlands, streams, and farms under their control. Many gamekeepers were promoted agricultural labourers, and this was true for John. His promotion speaks of loyalty, reliability, and hard work. Yet, it was the Duke's trust in him, more than John's work ethic, that truly marked a turning point for his family's future.

John worked as one of the Duke's gamekeepers for approximately 10 years, though not always in the same place. One year, he might look after the Manors of Fakenham Magna, Little Fakenham, Barnham, Sapiston, Honington, and Bardwell. Another year, it might be the Manors of Euston, Fakenham, Barnham, Sapiston, Honington, and Rymer.

The Euston Estate's Park House: a sixteenth-century former rectory with several later additions. Many working-class families lived in separate dwellings within Park House during the 1800s.

In 1851, John and Elizabeth lived with five children in Park House on the Euston Estate. Their two eldest had left home by the time of the 1851 Census. Mary, aged 25 and unmarried, worked as a house servant in Fornham All Saints near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. William had married Ann Balls in 1850; they lived with John's widowed father, close to the rest of the family.

John himself was recorded as a gamekeeper, aged 47 years; his wife was 46, and their children ranged in age from 20 down to 6. John, their eldest, was blind and made mats and baskets for a living; Sarah, aged 18, did not work outside the home; and 15-year-old Thomas worked as an agricultural labourer. The three youngest—Elizabeth, Lucy, and Anna—attended school.

Barnham, Suffolk, 1793.

Barnham windmill, Suffolk.

Barnham Road, Euston, Suffolk.

John's only other record in the 1850s—aside from the 1851 Census—is from late that same year, when the Duke appointed him gamekeeper for Euston, Barnham, Fakenham, Sapiston, Honington, and Bardwell. A decade later, the 1861 Census shows him retired and living in Barnham, a village just a few kilometres from Euston. He and Elizabeth were 60 and 55, respectively; their blind son, John, lived with them, making baskets; and Anna, still at home, went out to work as a domestic servant. On census night, Edward Turner, a 4-year-old grandson—the son of their eldest daughter, Mary Turner—was present.

The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland (1868) described Barnham as a collection of scattered houses. It had a windmill for grinding corn near the Little Ouse River, and its church—dedicated to St. Gregory—was a small, neat building with a tower. A free school, supported by the Duke of Grafton—who was lord of the manor and owned the parish—served the local community. In 1861, its population was 475.

For the 1871 Census, John and Elizabeth remained in Barnham with a household reduced to just three: John, aged 68, a former gamekeeper; Elizabeth, 66; and their son John, a 40-year-old blind basket maker. John died later that year, aged 68. He was buried in the Euston churchyard on October 9, 1871. Elizabeth was 73 years old when she died, and her burial took place on August 27, 1875, also in Euston.

St. Genevieve, Euston.

What happened to their son, John? Blind since childhood, he married twice. John's first wife was Elizabeth Byers, an American, whom he married in 1873. In the 1881 Census, they lived in Euston, with John making baskets. His second marriage was to Susan Hales on November 22, 1884, in the Euston Church. John and Susan lived in Euston until his death on Christmas Day, 1911. In January 1912, a Suffolk newspaper published a report on his funeral. One mourner was William Johnstone, estate agent for the 7th Duke of Grafton.

> **Euston. Funeral of "Blind John."** *In the quiet churchyard, with its peaceful surrounds, the remains of John Lillingstone, or, as he was better known in the district as "Blind John," were laid to rest on Saturday afternoon. Many of the villagers and children were present to pay a last token of respect. The Rev. Arthur Hermon officiated. The coffin was of polished elm, with black furniture, the breastplate bearing the following inscription:- "John Lillingstone, aged 81, died December 25th, 1911." Messrs. Henry Davey, E. Davey, A. Balaam, and J. Addison acted as bearers.*
>
> *The mourners were Mrs. Lillingstone (widow), Mr. and Mrs. Lillingstone (brother and sister-in-law), Mrs. Hogg (sister, Cambridge), Mr. S. Lillingstone (brother, Thetford). There were also present Mr. W. R. Johnstone (agent to the Duke of Grafton), Mr. and Mrs. Orchiston and Mrs. H. Davey.*

> *The floral tokens were as follows:- "To my devoted husband, from his heart-broken wife," "To my beloved husband, from his sorrowing wife—Gone before," "In kind remembrance, from Mr. and Mrs. Orchiston," "In loving remembrance, from all at Cambridge," "With deepest sympathy, from his neighbours—Mr. and Mrs. H. Davey," "In loving sympathy, from Eliza—Peace, Perfect Peace," "In loving remembrance from all at Thetford." Mr. W. Catton, of Troston, was the undertaker."*

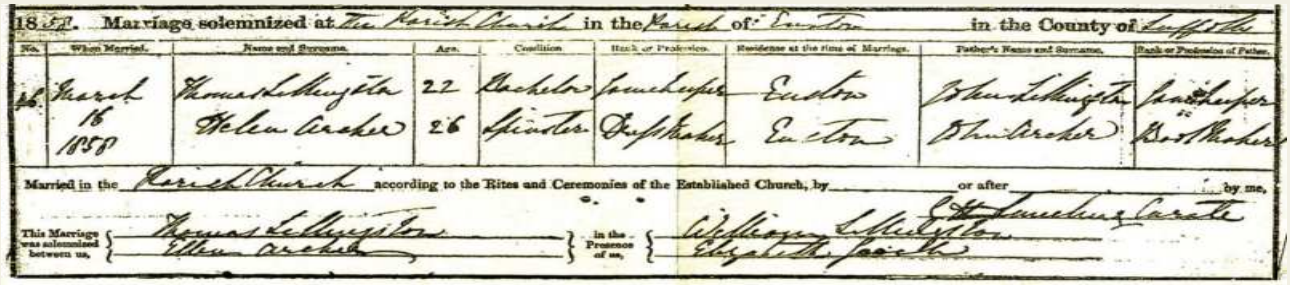
Thomas Lilystone and Ellen Archer
[William's Parents]

St. Peter's, Fakenham Magna.

Born on June 22, 1835, in Fakenham Magna, Thomas was the fifth child of John and Elizabeth Lillyston. At the age of 11 months, he was baptised on May 22, 1836, in St. Peter's, Fakenham Magna; two baptismal transcriptions show his surname as Lilystone and Lillystone. Although his birth predates official English birth certificates, we know the date from a General Declaration in Lieu of Oath made on December 8, 1862, before a Suffolk Magistrate. Mary Ann Goddard of Fakenham Magna proved Thomas' birth before he entered the British Civil Service in the 1860s:

> *I, Mary Ann Goddard, do solemnly and sincerely declare that Thomas Lillingstone son of John and Elizabeth Lillingstone of Euston, formerly residing at Fakenham Magna in the County of Suffolk, was born at Fakenham Magna on the 22nd day of June 1835, and that I recollect the circumstance on account of my son Henry Goddard being born on the said 22nd day of June 1835.*

For many years, both before and after Thomas' birth, his father had worked as an agricultural labourer. However, when Thomas was a boy, the Duke of Grafton appointed his father as one of his gamekeepers—a position that greatly improved the family's fortunes. In the 1851 Census, Thomas was recorded as a 15-year-old agricultural labourer in Euston, living in Park House with his parents and four siblings. By September 1854, the Duke—as he had done for Thomas' father—had promoted him to the position of gamekeeper.



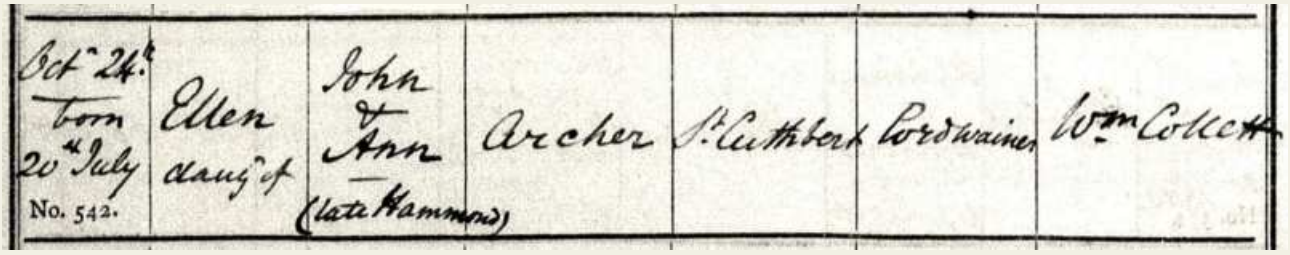
18 57. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Euston in the County of Suffolk

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
18	March 16 1858	Thomas Lillingston	22	Bachelor	Gamekeeper	Euston	John Lillingston	Gamekeeper
		Helen Archer	26	Spinster	Dressmaker	Euston	John Archer	Bootmaker

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by ____ or after ____ by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Thomas Lillingston, Ellen Archer. In the Presence of us, William Lillingston, Elizabeth Lillingston.

On March 16, 1858, St. Genevieve's Church in Euston was filled with promise as Thomas, 22, and Ellen Archer, 27, exchanged vows and began their married life. Both were familiar faces in the parish: Thomas, a local gamekeeper, and Ellen, a local dressmaker. Ellen had been born over the county border in Thetford on July 20, 1830, to John Archer and Ann Hammond. Her father was a skilled shoemaker, crafting new shoes from new leather—not to be mistaken for a cobbler, who repaired old shoes.


Ellen's baptism on October 24, 1830, at St. Mary's Church, Thetford, Norfolk.

Although Thomas married as Lillingston, he soon adopted the Lillingstone spelling, as used by his descendants today. Thomas and Ellen had two children:

1. William Hammond, born January 19, 1859, Euston
2. **Harry Thomas**, born November 25, 1864, London—died July 15, 1868, London

The early days of their marriage were spent in Euston, where William was born in January 1859. By September that year, they had moved to Bardwell. In 1861, Thomas is missing from the census. To be recorded, individuals had to sleep in a dwelling on census night. Census enumerators delivered forms to each household and instructed the head to list everyone who slept there on the night of the census—always a Sunday. The enumerator collected the completed forms and copied the details into enumeration books. Once the books were completed, most forms were destroyed. We search enumeration books to learn about an individual, a family, a village, etc. If Thomas spent census night watching for poachers in the woods, it would explain his lack of entry. But this is just one possibility; there are many others. We do know that Ellen and William were not in Suffolk on April 7, 1861—the night of the census. Instead, they were visiting her family in London.

Thomas worked as a gamekeeper for the Duke of Grafton for about eight years. During this time, he looked after various manors in different years, including Barnham, Bardwell, Euston, Fakenham, Honington, and Sapiston. Serving as one of the Duke's gamekeepers, Thomas provided testimony against thieves and poachers in several Petty Session hearings in Ixworth, Suffolk, between 1859 and 1862.

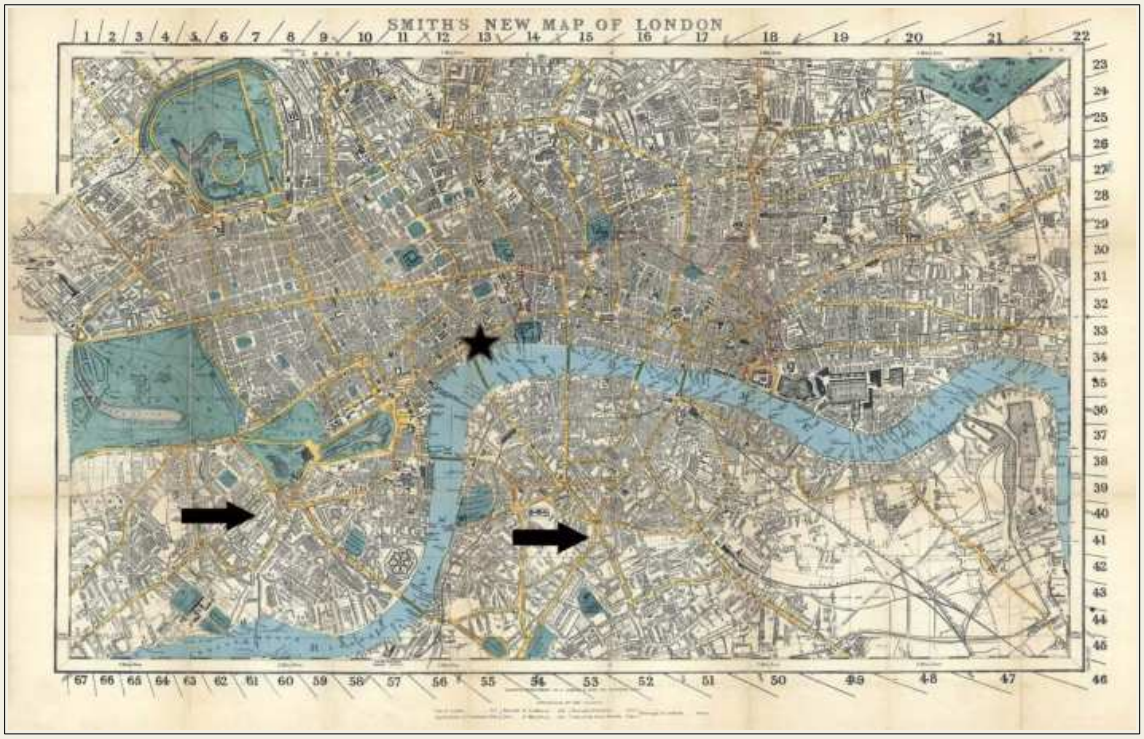
From Country to City

Around 1863 or 1864, Thomas, Ellen, and William left Suffolk for London—then a bustling metropolis of nearly three million residents. With the Duke of Grafton's support, Thomas obtained a position in the British Civil Service as a government messenger. His first appointment was in the Customs House, but soon afterwards, Thomas transferred to the Inland Revenue Office, Somerset House, where he remained until retirement.

Somerset House, circa 1880.

In the 1800s, the British Civil Service operated within a strict hierarchy. At its lowest level were the clerks, messengers, and porters. These positions—often filled by those with limited formal education—played a crucial role in the machinery of government, but were not highly paid or

prestigious. Messengers delivered messages, documents, and other items. They crisscrossed offices and locations, ensuring communication flowed smoothly between departments. Although Thomas' position was the lowest in the Civil Service, a messenger was a significant step up from his early days as an agricultural labourer. For many working-class people, securing any Civil Service position would have been considered an excellent opportunity for stable employment and social mobility.



Smith's New Map of London (1860). Elizabeth Street, Pimlico (left arrow); Newington Butts (right arrow); and the star next to the Thames River is Somerset House, where Thomas worked for the Inland Revenue Office.

After settling into London, Thomas and Ellen welcomed a second child into their family. William, then nearly six years old, gained a brother—Harry Thomas—born in Elizabeth Street, Pimlico, on November 25, 1864. Pimlico was a relatively new area in the mid-nineteenth century, having been laid out by Thomas Cubitt in the 1820s. The opening of Victoria Station in 1860 saw strong population growth, as improved transport and expanding housing drew more residents to that part of London. At the time the Lillingstones lived there, Pimlico had a genteel character, inhabited mainly by clerks, civil servants, and retired officers.

Harry's birth certificate.

By 1866, the family had moved to Moreton Terrace, Pimlico. It was there that tragedy struck in the summer of 1868. On July 15, young Harry—just three years and four months old—succumbed to measles and typhus. A few days later, he was buried in a common grave in Brompton Cemetery.

After Harry's death, they moved again. The 1871 Census shows them across the Thames River in Southwark, at 16 Newington Butts. An unusually named street with a long history, its name is believed to originate from archery butts, common in medieval England. Another claim to fame is its Elizabethan theatre—linked with William Shakespeare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Their 1871 Census schedule included Thomas, aged 35, supporting his family as a messenger for the Inland Revenue Office; Ellen, then 39, who kept the home; and William, a 12-year-old schoolboy. Joining the family was Naomi Archer, Ellen's much younger sister—a dressmaker and visitor whose presence hinted at close familial ties. A decade passed until the 1881 Census, which showed the family at the same address: Thomas as an Inland Revenue Office messenger; Ellen now 50; and William, who worked as a shipping clerk. Naomi remained a part of their household, employed as a companion.

Newington Butts, Southwark, London.

A Wedding and a Grandchild

July 1882 must have brought great joy to Thomas and Ellen when William married London-born Jessie Elizabeth Smith. The following year, a first grandchild—little Tom—was born, whose arrival would have lifted their hearts with pride and hope. He was not only their first grandchild, but the only one they would meet in person.

Then life took an unexpected turn. In pursuit of new opportunities, William, Jessie, and Tom emigrated to Australia. By late 1884, they had made their home in a small town outside Brisbane, Queensland. The great distance between England and Australia would have brought both the excitement of a fresh beginning, and the quiet sorrow of leaving loved ones behind.

As for Thomas and Ellen, they stayed in London, moving next door to 18 Newington Butts before the 1891 Census. That year, Thomas was 55, still working as a messenger, and Ellen, 60, managed the household with the help of a teenage domestic servant—a small sign of financial prosperity.

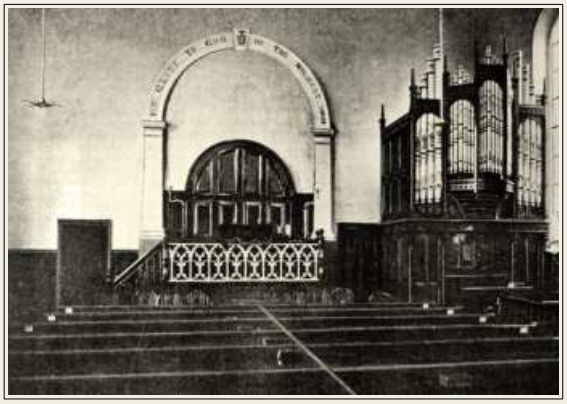
London's 1894 electoral roll has an entry for Thomas in Newington Butts, as does the 1895 London Post Office Directory. The latter offers a final glimpse into his professional life: he worked in the Secretary's Department of the Inland Revenue Office—a detail that hinted at dedication to his employer and, perhaps, a quiet sense of achievement.

Retirement in Thetford

Thomas retired around his 60th birthday in 1895, having earned a Civil Service pension after more than three decades in London. Deciding on a quieter life, he and Ellen settled in Thetford—the small town of her birth. Their retirement together was short-lived, however, as Ellen passed away in early 1899. She left no will and was buried in Section H of Thetford's London Road Cemetery. Inscribed on her headstone is: *In Loving Memory, Ellen Lillingstone, Born July 1830, Died March 1899, Gone home awhile before.*

Soon after Ellen's death, Thomas found companionship once again. His second wife was Elizabeth Webster née Butcher (1845–1937). Though 10 years younger than Thomas, she had also been born in Fakenham Magna, and their families would have known each other in such a small village. They shared ties to the Primitive Methodist Church too: Thomas had joined in the 1850s, and Elizabeth had been married to Francis Webster, a Primitive Methodist minister nearly 40 years her senior. Elizabeth and Francis had wed in 1879; a year later, their daughter—Ellen Gertrude Webster—was born in Thetford. Francis Webster died there in 1892.

Thetford, early 1900s.



Thetford Primitive Methodist Chapel, 1901.

The household of Thomas, his wife, and stepdaughter lived in 41 Earls Street, Thetford, for the 1901 Census: Thomas, aged 65 years, a retired government official; Elizabeth, 55; and Ellen, a 20-year-old draper's assistant. In the early 1900s, Ellen moved to East Dereham in Norfolk. There, on September 11, 1904, she married a watchmaker named William John Murrell. By the following year, Thomas and Elizabeth had settled into Station Road, Thetford.

Station Road, Thetford.

On December 20, 1912, Thomas died, aged 77 years. He was interred in Section H of the London Road Cemetery—the same section as his first wife, Ellen. Despite this closeness in location, they are not together; each lies in a separate grave, alone. Thomas' headstone bears the following inscription: *In Loving Memory of Thomas Lillingstone who fell asleep in Jesus, Dec. 20th 1912, In the 77th year of his age, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saint.*

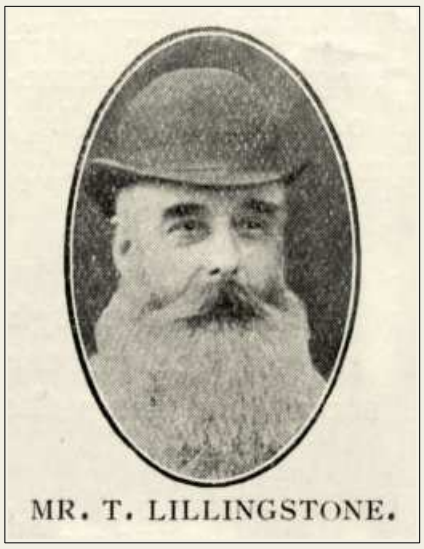
Just weeks after his death, Elizabeth applied to administer his modest estate. His entry appears in the 1913 edition of the *England and Wales National Probate Calendar*: **LILLINGSTONE Thomas** of 6 Station Road, Thetford, Norfolk, died 20 December 1912. Probate granted at Norwich on 28 January to Elizabeth Lillingstone, widow. Effects: £592 8s. 11d.

Obituaries

Thomas has two obituaries. The first published in a Norfolk newspaper shortly after his death:

> **Death of Mr. T. Lillingstone.** *Another old and respected inhabitant passed away on Friday in the person of Mr. Thos. Lillingstone, of Station-rd., who was born on the Euston estate of the Duke of Grafton, and was afterwards head gamekeeper. He subsequently became a porter at Somerset House, from which he retired on a good pension, and came to Thetford to enjoy his retirement. Deceased's first wife, Ellen Archer, of Thetford, died in March, 1899, and he afterwards married the widow of the late Rev. F. Webster of Thetford, who survives him.*
>
> *The funeral took place on Tuesday, and in addition to the widow and her daughter, there were present Mr. S. W. Lillingstone (nephew), Mr. R. Barker, Mr. Rolfe, Mrs. Hogg (Cambridge), Mr. E. Rush, Mr. R. Snowdon, Miss Swann, Mr. H. Saxby, Mrs. Foulger, Rev. J. P. Watts, Mr. H. Howard, and Mr. H. Ellis. The coffin was of unpolished oak, with brass plate inscribed: -"Thomas Lillingstone, died December 20th, 1912, aged 77." The Rev. R. Holman and the Rev. J. P. Watts officiated, and "Safe in the arms of Jesus" and "Rock of ages" were sung. Mrs. Lillingstone and family desire to thank all friends for their kind enquiries and sympathy in their bereavement.*

His second obituary is from *The Aldersgate Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1913). With thanks to Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism for its transcription and for Thomas' photograph:

> 
> MR. T. LILLINGSTONE.
>
> **Mr. Thomas Lillingstone.** *Thomas Lillingstone began life in a little Suffolk village named Fakenham, and early learned to supplement the family exchequer. Beneath the fervid evangelism of our early preachers he yielded himself to the "call divine," and soon his Christian principles were put to the test. Thomas must either throw up Methodism or lose his work. He stuck to his God and his Church, and his former master became his friend and prepared the way for him to obtain a situation in the Customs Office and finally in Somerset House.*
>
> *In London Bro. Lillingstone worshipped in turns at Newington and Trinity Street, taking an intelligent and zealous interest in Christian work. Blessed with a fine presence and a stentorian voice, few men were so capable of attracting and holding a crowd.*
>
> *About seventeen years ago he retired to Thetford, where in season and out of season he preached the Gospel of the grace of God, and when not thus engaged was regularly present as a hearer and helper. Outside the Church he was deeply respected, and served a short period as a Borough Councillor.*

A Tale of Two Brothers

Before concluding the story of Thomas Lillingstone, let's pause to explore the life of his eldest brother—a comparison that will underscore the influence of the Duke of Grafton in Thomas' life.

Thomas had three brothers. Two survived infancy and went on to marry, but only one had children: William, born on February 27, 1828, in Fakenham Magna, where he died on June 21, 1907. In 1850, William married Ann Balls. Together, they had three children: Samuel (1851–1853), Thomas (1854–1917), and Samuel William (1861–1923).

The census entries for William and his sons reveal a typical English family of the rural labouring class. William lived in the village of Fakenham Magna all his life. He sometimes took in lodgers; his employment included agricultural labourer, rat catcher, mole catcher, and warrener. A warrener was employed to manage and maintain a warren—a place where rabbits were bred for food and fur. Landowners, particularly lords of the manor, often controlled rabbit warrens as part of their estates.

Thomas, William's son, earned a living throughout his life as an agricultural labourer or shepherd, mostly in Fakenham Magna, but with periods in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. In 1881, he had a slight brush with the law after admitting to poaching.

His younger brother, Samuel William, worked in Fakenham Magna as a warrener, then moved on to a farm close by at Stanton. In 1901, he lived in Thetford, where he held various jobs over the years: innkeeper, warrener, beer retailer, licensed victualler, and poultry or fowl dealer.

Warreners in the early 1900s, likely at Barnham, Suffolk, where the Duke of Grafton was Lord of the Manor.

Turning now to Thomas' life, we see a markedly different path. He started work as an agricultural labourer in Fakenham Magna. As a teen, the Duke appointed him as a gamekeeper, then helped him secure a position in the Civil Service in London—a position Thomas held for over 30 years. During the 1880s, his only surviving son emigrated to Queensland, where, within five years, he had established himself on his own 160-acre farm.

Thomas retired to Thetford in 1895 with a government pension. This provided him with financial security until his death—security that was unavailable to his brother. William died in 1907, aged 79—a year before the British Government established the Old Age Pension, which supported those over 70 if their income fell below a certain threshold. For William, who had spent a lifetime as a manual labourer, the reality was stark: if he could not work, he had to rely on family or charity.

William Hammond Lillingstone and Jessie Elizabeth Smith

William Hammond Lillingstone was born on January 19, 1859, in Euston, where his father served as gamekeeper for the Duke of Grafton. At that time, his ancestors had lived on the Duke's lands for a century. The name "Hammond" came from his maternal grandmother. Though born in Euston, William was baptised on March 26, 1859, through the Thetford Primitive Methodist Circuit.

William's baptism in the Thetford Primitive Methodist Circuit church records.

The family relocated from Euston to Bardwell when he was an infant. We might expect to find them in Bardwell for the 1861 Census, but there is no entry for Thomas, and William—aged 2—and his mother were visiting her family in London. Within two years, the small family left Suffolk and moved

to Pimlico, London. In 1866, 7-year-old William became a pupil at St. Michael's National School, Chester Square, Pimlico. By 1871, they had shifted across London to 16 Newington Butts in Southwark. This would be his home for more than 10 years. Their entry for the 1871 Census included his father, aged 35, working as an Inland Revenue Office messenger; his mother, aged 39; and William, recorded as a 12-year-old schoolboy. Visiting them was his mother's sister, Naomi Archer, a dressmaker.

St. Michael's National School, Pimlico, in 1848.

The 1881 Census shows the family at the same address. His father was employed as a messenger for the Inland Revenue Office; his mother managed the household; and William had come of age and worked as a shipping clerk. Aunt Naomi remained a part of the family.

Tying the Knot in Lambeth

1882. Marriage solemnized at the Register Office in the District of Lambeth in the County of Surrey

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
180	First July 1882	William Hammond Lillingstone	23 Years	Bachelor	Clerk	Elephant Buildings Newington Butts	Thomas Lillingstone	Messenger
		Jessie Elizabeth Smith	24 Years	Spinster	—	6 Harleyford Street Kennington	Ferdinand Dudley Ward Smith	Builder

Married in the Register Office according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the by Certificate before by me, J W Hartley, Registrar

This Marriage was solemnized between us, W H Lillingstone, J E Smith, in the Presence of us, George Calder Smith, Hannah Smith

W B Wilmot, Superintendent Registrar

William married at the Lambeth Registry Office on July 1, 1882. His bride was Jessie Elizabeth Smith, a daughter of Ferdinand Dudley Ward Smith and Jessie Calder. Born on January 22, 1858, in Holloway, Islington, Jessie was a year older than William. In her childhood, her father had worked as a bricklayer, but later became a builder, then a microscope dealer who took in boarders.

According to their marriage certificate, William was a 23-year-old bachelor working as a clerk, living in Elephant Buildings, Newington Butts; Jessie, aged 24 and unmarried, resided at 6 Harleyford Street, Kennington. The ceremony was witnessed by two of her siblings: George Calder Smith and Hannah Smith, both of whom would also settle in Queensland.

The Smith siblings maintained close ties in Queensland over many decades. Hannah lived with Jessie before she married in Brisbane in 1889; Jessie was one of her witnesses. The sisters then spent years on adjoining farms in North Maleny, carved out of virgin forest on the Blackall Range. In 1892, Jessie undertook a lengthy journey to North Queensland to visit George in Townsville. We know the next generation down from Jessie, Hannah, and George—the cousins—continued to stay in contact.

William and Jessie's first child—Tom—was born in London in 1883. For the birth, Jessie had returned to her family in Kennington. Tom's birth certificate listed William as the informant, describing himself as a ship and insurance broker residing at 29 Elmington Road, Camberwell. Tom would be their only child born in England; the rest were born in Queensland:

1. **Tom**, June 2, 1883, Kennington, London—died October 5, 1917, Broodseinde Ridge, Belgium
2. **Dudley**, May 31, 1885, Marburg, Queensland—died November 19, 1968, Brisbane, Queensland
3. **Theodora**, December 14, 1886, Kangaroo Point, Queensland—died February 11, 1887, Brisbane, Queensland
4. **Jessie Ellen** [called Nell], January 24, 1888, Brisbane, Queensland—died February 19, 1950, Grafton, NSW
5. **Charlotte Vivian**, December 6, 1891, Maleny, Queensland—died January 18, 1952, Brisbane, Queensland
6. **Doris**, August 18, 1895, Maleny, Queensland—died November 5, 1996, Coffs Harbour, NSW
7. **William George**, May 10, 1900, Maleny, Queensland—died September 30, 1981, Melbourne, Victoria

From London to Queensland

Before Tom turned two, the family had emigrated to Queensland. They left behind family and friends to start a new life on the far side of the world. By late 1884, they were living in Marburg—a small town west of Brisbane. Its economy during the 1880s revolved around timber-getting and farming. Settlers arrived in a steady stream, eager to forge a life in the thick vine forests of the Rosewood Scrub. But the Lillingstones were not there to claim land—William had taken work as a sawmill labourer, a stark departure from his former life in a London office.

Marburg as it was when the Lillingstones lived there 1884–1886: the building on the left is the original Marburg Hotel—a single-storey structure built in 1881; its second storey was added circa 1888.

In Marburg, he quickly involved himself in his new community: singing in the Rosewood Primitive Methodist Church choir and serving on the committee of the Marburg School of Arts. William was on the committee when the School of Arts building officially opened in 1885. Impressively, the town was lit by electricity for its opening—thanks to Thomas Lorimer Smith, who installed electric lighting at his nearby sawmill. William also spoke at a public meeting seeking to petition the Queensland Government to open a Marburg postal-telegraph office, money-order office, and savings bank.

William and Jessie's second son, Dudley, was born in Marburg on May 31, 1885. The following year, between February and October, the family moved to Main Street, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane.

Though William had worked as a sawmill labourer in Marburg, his intelligence and business acumen soon set him apart. His second job was resident manager of the Kangaroo Point and Nerang Sawmill Company, situated on a bend in the Brisbane River.

Panorama of the Brisbane River, circa 1882. The arrow points to where the Lillingstone family lived at the Kangaroo Point and Nerang Sawmill. From the mill, they could take a public ferry across the river to the city.

A view of the timber yards at the end of Main Street, Kangaroo Point, circa 1882.

Their first daughter, Theodora, was born at Kangaroo Point on December 14, 1886. Tragically, she lived for only two months, passing away on February 11, 1887. The next day, her funeral left from the family home for her interment in the Brisbane General Cemetery, Toowong.

A Farm Named "Euston"

On June 30, 1887, William took a decisive step toward shaping his family's future. He walked into the Department of Public Lands on George Street in Brisbane, accompanied by James Dudley Ward Smith, a relative of his wife. Together, they selected 160-acre agricultural farms in the Parish of Maleny on the Blackall Range, north of Brisbane. This area would later be known as North Maleny. Although both men initially committed to the land, only William took up his selection. James changed his mind in early 1888 and received a small refund on his initial payment. William, however, embraced the opportunity and called his selection **"Euston"**—a tribute to his birthplace in Suffolk. On moving to this land in October 1887, his family consisted of:

- **Tom**, aged 4
- **Dudley**, aged 2
- **Theodora** (1886–1887)
- **Jessie**, who was carrying their fourth child, Nell (born in Brisbane in January 1888)

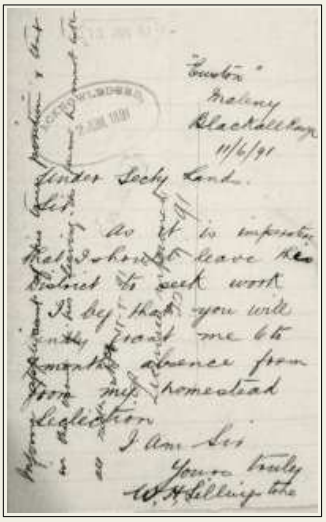
William's move marked the beginning of nearly 20 years on the Blackall Range. But before his family could leave Brisbane, he had to start clearing the land. In the early days, a selector's initial shelter was often no more than a canvas tent or a bark humpy. Such makeshift dwellings served as home while the arduous work of land clearing began—an essential task that had to be undertaken prior to planting crops or constructing a permanent building. It was physically demanding work,

especially as William's land survey showed challenging terrain: broken, stony, with tangled vine scrub. Eventually, he would build a two-roomed cottage with an added verandah room, which served the growing family until a larger home was built in the 1890s.

This was a very busy time for the family. While the children sometimes roamed the countryside, splashed in the Obi Obi Creek, and shared picnic lunches beneath the wide Queensland sky, most days were devoted to building the farm from the ground up. They began with chickens and pigs, gradually expanding to include a dairy herd. Their efforts would pay off—by 1907, the farm was thriving. Yet the early years were defined by hard-won progress and financial strain.

The Lillingstones, like many other Maleny land selectors, struggled during the economic depression of the 1890s. Letters from William and Jessie reveal how hard these years really were. To receive his land deed, William had to meet certain government regulations—one was living on his land for five years. In June 1891, he wrote to the Queensland Lands Department seeking an exemption to the residence requirement.

> *As it is imperative that I should leave this District to seek work I beg that you will kindly grant me 6 to 7 months absence from my homestead selection.*



William's Lands Dept. letter.

Cleared land on a dairy farm near North Maleny, early 1900s.

The Land Commissioner noted that William had been in genuine occupation for some time and only wanted to leave temporarily to earn money. He asked that William be allowed a reasonable amount of time to do so. The Lands Department disagreed and issued William a warning—if he left, he risked losing his farm:

> *Inform applicant of his true position and that in the event of his leaving his farm he must take all risk.*

In June 1893, it was Jessie who wrote to the Department. She asked for extra time to pay for their land deed, fearful of a fine if payment was late:

> *Sir, I come to you in great trouble feeling that no one but yourself can help me out of it. My husband is a Selector whose five years has expired. The deed being granted last January we were to have paid the deed fees this month, I do not know on what day, but we cannot possibly obtain the sum for a few more weeks, & my husband has received an intimation (though not official) that he will be fined £4, in consequence of not having paid. I now write to entreat you please to grant us a little longer space of time in which to pay the Deed fees—£1.10.10. Times have been fearfully hard with us, & my husband having been from home a great deal in search*

> *of employment, our own place has been neglected, our children all being too young to give any material help. Please consider my request, & be merciful enough to grant a little respite, & we will do our best to pay as soon as possible. I have not told my husband of having written to you, lest he should object to my taking the liberty, with many apologies for doing so, & asking that our terrible anxiety may be my excuse.*

The Department agreed to defer payment and, in December 1893, William received the deed to his 160-acre farm. In just two generations, the Lillingstone family's trajectory had shifted dramatically: from Thomas (1835–1912), who began his working life as an English agricultural labourer, to William (1859–1941), now an Australian landowner.

"Euston," North Maleny.

Jessie Lillingstone.

William and Jessie's remaining children were Nell, born in Brisbane in 1888; Charlotte Vivian, born in 1891; Doris, in 1895; and William George, in 1900—the last three born in Maleny.

It was early 1907 when the Lillingstone family's connection to Maleny came to an end. During the preceding years, William had dedicated himself to transforming his land into a successful dairy farm, all the while balancing additional employment and active participation in his community:

1890s—Partner in a Maleny sawmill for some years.

1891—Became an honorary agent for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty. Originally called the Queensland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, it shortened its name and expanded its focus to include children in 1890.

1893—The wife of another Maleny land selector died after childbirth. William conducted her burial service, as no minister was available.

1898—Part of a delegation that petitioned the Queensland Government for a railway extension to the Blackall Range.

Pre-1900—Prior to emigrating to Australia, William spent several years employed in a London office, where he may have trained under an accountant as an articled clerk. Once in Queensland, he drew upon those clerical skills to work as a clerk for a wealthy Brisbane businessman.

1900—The North Maleny Provisional School opened in 1897 in an old timber hut on his farm. According to the Queensland Department of Public Instruction, William had no professional teaching qualifications, but this did not prevent him from becoming its fourth teacher, serving 1900–

1906. His class sizes ranged from 19 students in 1900 to 12 in 1903. Queensland Provisional School teachers were usually unclassified. They were not provided with a residence and were paid less than the lowest classified teachers. Many such teachers had a basic education, yet some were well-educated but had failed in other careers. William continued as the North Maleny school teacher even after the local community built a new school across the road from his farm. This school opened in March 1902, and he taught there until the end of 1906, with a five-month break in 1904. That year, he intended to travel to England—he resigned as a teacher on February 26 and was reinstated on July 25.

The Maleny Butter Factory and the Maleny township, early 1900s.

1904—The Maleny Butter Factory opened late in the year. All dairy farmers who supplied cream to the factory were required to hold shares, and William was a shareholder—though never a company director. In September 1906, he attended a shareholders' meeting. Its Minutes recorded: *Moved by Mr. Lillingstone and seconded by Mr. Lawley that the issue with the Commercial Bank of Australia be left to the Directors.*

1906—Appointed the Maleny Electoral Registrar.

William and Jessie.

Farewell Maleny

In early 1907, the Lillingstone family embarked on another major change. William sold **"Euston,"** the family bid farewell to Queensland, and they set sail for Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada—a world away from the life they had built. Not everyone made the voyage, though: Nell, their eldest daughter, remained behind, having married in 1905 and now expecting her second child. The following appeared in the local newspaper, announcing that the Lillingstones were moving overseas:

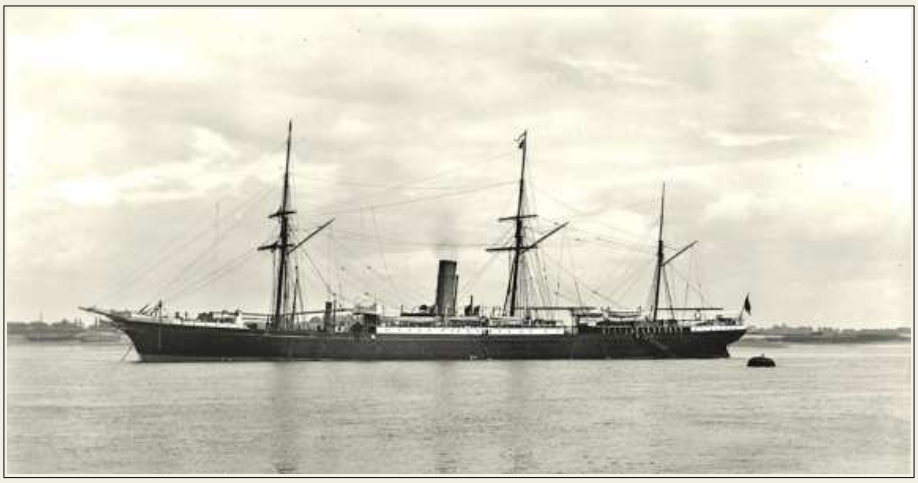
> Maleny. *This district has hardly yet realised that it has lost a whole family, and a most respected one, from amongst its not too large population. The mountain will hardly be the same place*

without such old residents as the Lillingstones, for it is to them that I refer. Mr. W. H. Lillingstone was the master of our provisional school, a position which he has held with satisfaction to about all of us for the last six years. Quite recently he was offered a good price for his 50-acre dairy farm adjoining the school reserve, which he accepted, and now he has left for Canada, taking with him his wife and family of five all practically grown up. It is a distinct loss to this district, and to Queensland, to lose such a talented family.

Mr. Lillingstone has been a resident for 22 years [incorrect], and has seen Maleny develop slowly as a timber district through perhaps half of his time here, and he has also witnessed its far more rapid growth as one of the best dairying centres in Queensland, and that is saying a good deal. Its growth, as Mr. Lillingstone could testify, has been very rapid since the establishment of the Butter Factory, and now we are on the point of seeing the birth of a pretty little township.

Great sorrow has been expressed on all sides that one who has been so much identified with the place as Mr. Lillingstone, should be leaving just as it was getting to be "some pumpkins." We wish the family good luck in their new venture, while regretting that they should be leaving this State.

William and Jessie Lillingstone with children: Doris, William Jnr., Dudley, Charlotte and Tom, circa 1907.



Launched in 1883, the steam ship "Aorangi" carried passengers and refrigerated cargo.

The Lillingstone family boarded the *Aorangi* at the Pinkenba Wharf, Brisbane. They sailed on February 20, 1907, for Vancouver via Honolulu. William and Jessie travelled Second Class with

their three youngest children: Charlotte, Doris, and William Jnr. Their older sons—23-year-old Tom and 21-year-old Dudley—made the voyage in steerage. Upon arriving in Vancouver, William stated his occupation as broker and declared $1,000 in cash. Tom, listed as a farmer, and Dudley as a carpenter, each carried $250. When asked by Canadian Immigration if they intended to settle in the country, they answered yes.

Vancouver, early 1900s.

Vancouver Directory, 1911.

By 1908, William had secured a position in Vancouver as a clerk with the Pacific Coast Planing Mill. His sons also found employment: Tom as a clerk; Dudley as a carpenter. The following year, Charlotte joined the ranks of working professionals as a stenographer for the Royal City Planing Mills. Around this time, William moved on to the Terminal City Iron Works, where he worked as an accountant until their return to Queensland in 1912. His new job was another change—a shift from the timber trade to the iron industry.

Tom returned to Queensland between 1909 and 1911 and swapped his clerk's pen for a carpenter's apron. He settled briefly in Nanango, but "knocked about all over the country." This phrase hints at a life filled with travel and countless tales. Back in Canada, the 1911 Census captured the Lillingstones as naturalised Canadians. They were a Methodist family, with William working as an accountant; Dudley as a carpenter; and Charlotte as a stenographer—each contributing to the life of their adopted city.

Return to Queensland

Later in 1911, Dudley left Canada. Reunited with Tom in Brisbane, they launched the Lillingstone Brothers carpentry business. The rest of the family—William, Jessie, Charlotte, Doris, and young William—followed in September 1912. Though William had spent nearly two decades in Maleny, his ties to the town had faded, and he would never again call it home. Instead, the family found a new home in the Brisbane suburb of Auchenflower, where Tom and Dudley joined them.

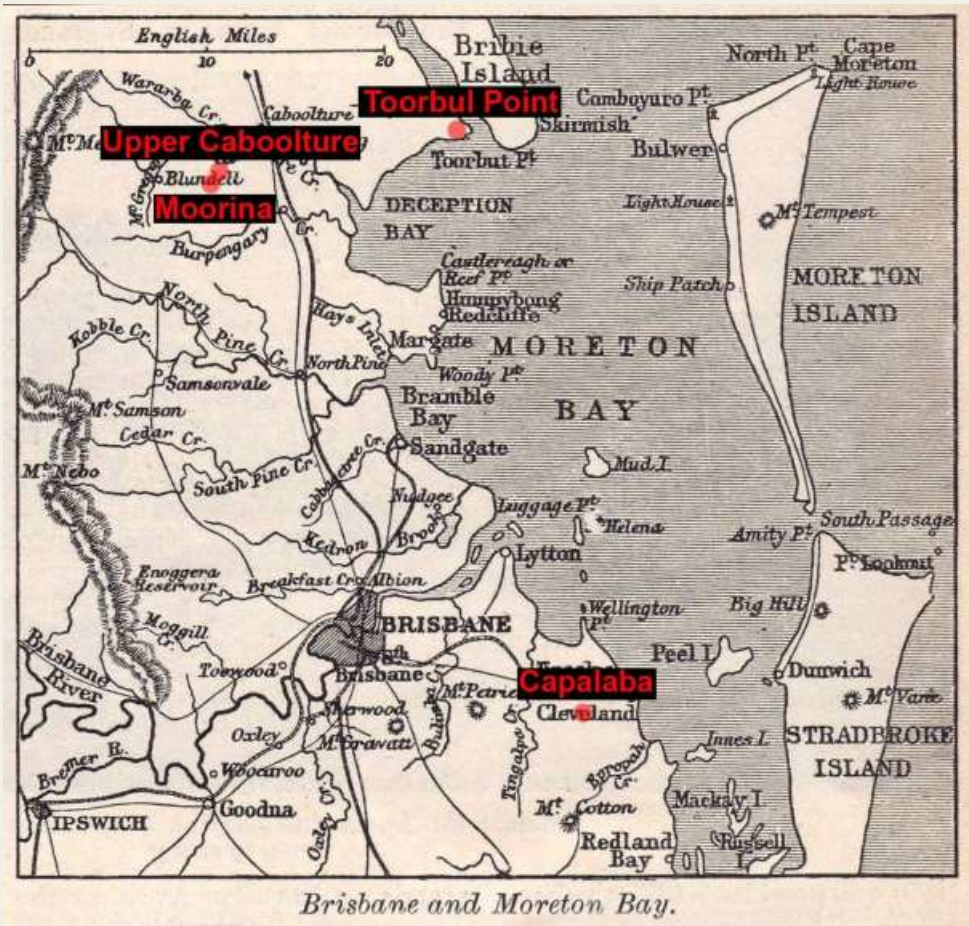
William resumed accountancy work in Brisbane. Around this time, a subtle yet profound shift occurred: their religion changed from Methodism to the Open Brethren—the same religion as James Dudley Ward Smith, Jessie's relative who lived nearby. This adds a new dimension to the family, though we know they later had connections with the Methodist and Baptist traditions. One story has been passed down: William had a favourite hymn—but which one has now been lost to time.

The Impact of World War I

The family left Auchenflower to move a stone's throw away to Milton in 1914—the same year that World War I broke out. The war would profoundly affect them all. About six weeks after Australia entered the conflict, William and Jessie's son-in-law, Jack McGrath—Nell's husband—enlisted in

the Australian Imperial Force. At the time, the McGraths were living with their two young sons at Ulong Creek in northern NSW. Jack was wounded in action at Gallipoli in June 1915 and returned home later that year with a permanent disability. Two weeks after Jack's enlistment, William and Jessie's second son, Dudley, also enlisted, though he was discharged from the 1st Australian General Hospital in Brisbane only days later. Their eldest son—Tom—then living in NSW, enlisted in 1916 in Lismore. He was 33; tall and slim, with dark brown hair and grey eyes that must have held both resolve and fear. Just three weeks before he sailed to England, Tom married 25-year-old Stella Booth of Wellington Point, Brisbane—a union formed in the fragile pause before departure.

After training in England, Tom landed in France in July 1917 as part of the 41st Battalion. In the chill of October 5, 1917, amid the fury of Belgium's Battle of Broodseinde Ridge, he fell—one of 36 men of the 41st killed that day, with more than 200 wounded. Tom has no headstone, but his sacrifice is etched on seven Honour Rolls overseas and in Australia. Stella never remarried; she remained Tom's widow for more than 50 years until her death in 1969, aged 77.



Brisbane and Moreton Bay.

Returning to 1914—with Jack's wounding and Tom's tragic death yet to unfold—we find William had decided to leave accountancy and return to teaching. Aged 55, he stepped back into a classroom as head teacher at Toorbul Point Provisional School. Situated 21 kilometres east of Caboolture, the school had 12 pupils during William's tenure. Over the following decade, his teaching journey continued through several small Queensland schools: Caboolture Upper State School (1917), Moorina State School (1918), and Capalaba State School (1923).

Toorbul Point State School, circa 1910.

40th Wedding Anniversary

While living at Moorina in 1922, William and Jessie marked an important milestone—their 40th wedding anniversary. Months later, sorrow descended. On November 20, 1922, William's beloved Jessie passed away after a gradual decline in health.

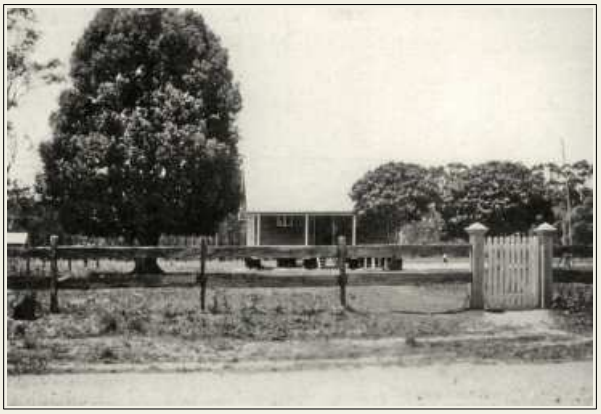
The next day, mourners gathered at the Caboolture Methodist Church to pay their last respects before her interment in the Caboolture Cemetery. That same week, William placed a bereavement notice in *The Brisbane Courier*. His brief expression of gratitude underlined the quiet strength of a grieving family:

> *Mr. W. H. Lillingstone and Family, of Upper Caboolture, wish to thank the many kind friends for their messages of sympathy, in the loss of their wife and mother.*

Left: William and Jessie.

For many years, Jessie lay in an unmarked grave. A simple commemorative plaque now lies on the ground to honour her memory.

In 1923, William moved to Capalaba—his final teaching position with the Queensland Department of Public Instruction. The school had originally opened in 1874. It grew quickly due to the district's booming timber industry, but when trade declined, families left, and it closed in 1922. Locals fought hard to have their school reopened and succeeded the following year (1923), with William as its new teacher.



Capalaba State School, 1920.

He—true to form—immersed himself in his new community. Joined by a hardworking group of volunteers, William organised Arbor Day in May 1924, where students and families gathered for tree planting, games, and laughter.

In the end, this event did more than beautify the school grounds and educate students about the importance of trees. The adults used the occasion to discuss building a Capalaba School of Arts. Later that year, a School of Arts Committee—with William at its helm—was thriving. Thanks to early fundraising efforts, they were able to buy land,

and their major fundraising event of 1924 was a Village Fair. Held on their newly-purchased site in November that year, William hosted dignitaries at afternoon tea after the opening ceremony. The fair raised about £45 for their building fund, with stalls bursting with handmade crafts, local produce, toys, a lucky dip, and refreshments.

As the year drew to a close, 65-year-old William tendered his resignation from the School of Arts Committee, in preparation for leaving Brisbane. At the December 1924 meeting, members elected his replacement, but didn't let him go quietly. In a gesture of heartfelt appreciation, the committee presented him with a silver-mounted shaving mirror and a Gillette safety razor. The Capalaba School also farewelled William, as reported in *The Brisbane Courier* on December 18, 1924:

> Capalaba. School Vacation. *Sports were the order of the day at the annual breaking up picnic for the midsummer vacation at the State School. The chairman, on behalf of the School Committee, presented the head master (Mr. W. H. Lillingstone), who was retiring on account of reaching the age limit, with a leather kit bag, and expressed the regret that parents and residents felt at losing him from among their midst.*

Later Years on the Eastern Dorrigo Plateau, NSW

The next stage in William's life was both busy and deeply rewarding. By early 1925, he had settled inland from Coffs Harbour, in the close-knit sawmilling community of Timmsvale and Ulong—about 5 kilometres apart—perched on the rugged Eastern Dorrigo Plateau in northern NSW. Here, amidst the hum of sawmills and the scent of freshly cut timber, William was surrounded by family again.

William with family in NSW.

At this stage in William's life, the intertwined paths of four of his children reveal much about the dynamics of the Lillingstone family. His daughters—Nell and Charlotte—had married the McGrath brothers: Nell and Jack in 1905; Charlotte and Dave in 1919. Meanwhile, his daughter Doris and son Dudley had married siblings, Tom and Emily Timms, in 1917 and 1921, respectively.

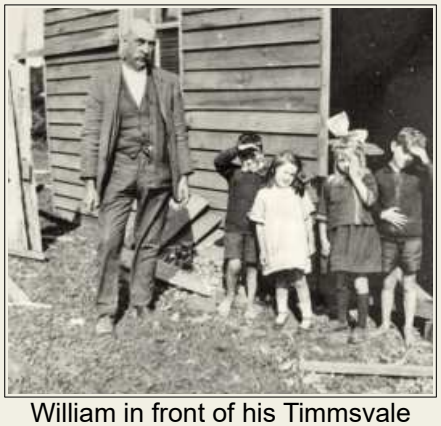
Tom Timms: The Driving Force Behind Timmsvale

Amongst these four couples, one figure stands out as truly pivotal to the Lillingstone family: William's son-in-law, Tom Timms of Timmsvale. As a teenager in 1907, he had travelled with his father to the Eastern Dorrigo Plateau to take up farming. Tom, a resourceful and inventive man, then turned his hand to timber-getting—hauling logs with his bullock team to the Coffs Harbour Jetty to be shipped to Sydney.

From this modest start, he built a timber empire stretching as far as Grafton. Tom's first sawmill, ingeniously powered by a water turbine, opened in Timmsvale in the early 1920s. In 1929, his sterling reputation caught the attention of the esteemed Beale Piano Company (established in 1893; it would grow to become the British Empire's largest piano manufacturer). The Beales invited Tom to become a shareholder in a new Timmsvale sawmill. He agreed, and they established the Timmsvale Timber Company with an impressive capital investment of £30,000. Tom contributed land and timber, took on the role of manager, and accepted a company directorship.

Though his businesses would have their ups and downs, he employed an average of 50 workers for nearly 50 years—including his brothers-in-law Dudley Lillingstone, and Jack and Dave McGrath. Tom was well into his seventies before he and Doris sold up and retired to Coffs Harbour in 1968.

Tom Timms' Hydro Timber Mill in Timmsvale.



William in front of his Timmsvale School. Students: Dudley and Jessie Timms (grandchildren), and Addie and Bert Stride.

William's Return to Teaching

After leaving Capalaba and officially retiring from the Queensland Department of Public Instruction, William had celebrated his 66th birthday, but was not quite ready to step away from the classroom. In Timmsvale, son-in-law Tom Timms built a small schoolhouse. The Timmsvale Subsidised School opened in early 1925, with William as its teacher for the next three years. Unlike a standard NSW Department of Education school, it operated under the subsidised model—a lifeline for families in remote areas where a government school was not feasible. The Department paid a per-student subsidy, with parents responsible for the building and teacher. In Timmsvale, they had William. Years earlier, he had taught his own children; now, his classroom held grandchildren.

Left: William with grandchildren; Centre: with Timmsvale School students in 1927; Right: William.

William finally retired from teaching in 1928, aged 69. In the same year, the NSW Department of Education opened a larger school in Timmsvale for six or seven families with school-aged children. After retirement, he stayed on in the district, and many photos from this time show William with his grandchildren, out in the bush or around the sawmills. He returned to Brisbane in 1936.

William: A Life Remembered

Leaving behind the Timms and McGrath families in NSW, William's final years were spent with his son, Dudley, in Holland Park, Brisbane. His 80th birthday was acknowledged in *The Telegraph* in January 1939. It described a man sharp of mind, one who liked reading, walking, the cinema, and was brimming with stories of Queensland's early settlement days.

General hospital, Nurses' Quarters and Wattlebrae, Brisbane, circa 1939.

William's long life drew to a close less than three years later when he passed away in Brisbane's Wattlebrae Hospital on September 4, 1941, at the age of 82. Though he rests in an unmarked grave in the South Brisbane Cemetery—separated from his beloved Jessie, who lies in Caboolture—William lives on in family memories. *The Telegraph* published his obituary on September 8, 1941:

> **Old Citizen Passes.** *When Mr. W. H. Lillingstone, of Palm Avenue, Holland Park, died in hospital last Thursday after a short illness, Queensland lost another of its early pioneers and settlers. He was over 82 years of age and until a week ago, had always enjoyed perfect health.*
>
> *Coming to Brisbane from England in 1882 he became interested in saw mills and timber, and for some time was active in that line in various parts of Southern Queensland. Later, he selected land on the then newly-opened Blackall Range.*
>
> *In 1907 he took his family to Canada, where again timber and sawmills claimed his attention, but in 1912 he returned to Queensland. He then entered the Education Department and remained until retiring age, but could not resist the call of timber, and put in several more years in NSW among sawmills.*
>
> *For the last five years he had lived in Brisbane where he kept in touch with old associates in the business. He will be greatly missed by a large circle of friends and his three daughters and two sons, Mesdames J. McGrath, D. McGrath, and T. Timms, of Timmsvale, NSW, and Messrs. D. Lillingstone, of Brisbane, and W. G. Lillingstone, Melbourne. He also leaves 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.*

From ledger books to sawmills, from dairying to schoolhouse lessons, William—alongside Jessie—helped shape an emerging state. Their legacy lives on in the family they nurtured, the values they passed down, and the service of their descendants. Two sons and a son-in-law enlisted in World War I; one son made the ultimate sacrifice, and their son-in-law was left permanently disabled. In the next generation, seven grandsons enlisted in World War II. Through war and peace, migration and memory, the Lillingstone name remains woven into the fabric of Australian life.

Closing Reflections

The Lillingstone story has unfolded across centuries and continents. Originating in rural Suffolk, the family transitioned from English agricultural labourer to Australian landowner in two generations—a journey that had them navigating the crowded streets of Victorian London, sailing oceans to far-flung Queensland, the booming frontier city of Vancouver, and back again to the familiar soil of Queensland.

This reflects not only the socioeconomic mobility of a single family, but also the broader themes of migration and resilience characteristic of the colonial experience. Contemporary Lillingstones should be very proud of their hardworking ancestors.

We extend our thanks to everyone who generously shared memories, photos, and insights. Your contributions helped breathe life into the history of the Lillingstones and allowed it to be felt, not merely read. However, like all families, its stories have, over time, taken on a life of their own—some grounded in fact, others embroidered by imagination or failing memory. Amongst the most enduring tales about William are:

- His ancestors owned a stately home called “Lillingstone Hall” in Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire.
- He was an only child raised in a wealthy household staffed by a housekeeper, maids, cooks, and gardeners.
- He attended Oxford University.
- He had professional teaching qualifications.
- He had no direct male descendants to carry on the Lillingstone name.
- He was a cousin of Captain Charles Alfred Gordon Lillingston, who married the heiress, Mabel Harriet Ogilvie of Yulgilbar Castle—a 200,000-acre property near Grafton, NSW. Lillingston was a grandson of Alfred Spooner, a *nouveaux riche* ironmaster from Birmingham in Warwickshire, England. Spooner married Elizabeth Mary Agnes Lillingston, sole heiress of Luke Lillingston of Yorkshire, England. Three days before they wed in 1797, he assumed the Lillingston surname by Royal Assent.

We encourage you to consider these—and other Lillingstone claims—as interesting perspectives, best appreciated alongside official records and verified historical sources. In this way, we honour and acknowledge William Hammond Lillingstone’s true life achievements.

Contact Email

lillingstone@mailfence.com

August 2025

PUBLIC DOMAIN
CC0 1.0 Universal